DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 981 HE 013 092

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TITLE	Recruitment and Admissions: Opening the Door for Re-entry Women. Field Evaluation Draft.
INSTITUTION	Association of American Colleges, Washington, D.C. Project on the Status and Education of Women.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Aug 80
GRANT	G0079-01070
NOTE	15p.: For related documents see HE 013 090-091.
AVAILABLE FROM	Women's Re-entry Project, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education: Admission Criteria: Adult Students: *College Admission: *College Students: Compliance (Legal): *Females: Higher Education: Information Dissemination: Information Needs: Nontraditional Students: Outreach Programs: *Reentry Students: Student College Relationship: Student Costs: *Student Recruitment: Womens Education

ABSTRACT

Problems in the recruitment and admission of re-entry women are identified, and ways in which institutions can be more responsive to these students are suggested. A wide range of possible actions is included so that institutions can pursue those most appropriate to their individual circumstances. Suggestions concerning recruitment include the following areas: what women need to know, developing specific materials, outreach strategies, re-entry workshops and other types of offerings, direct institutional services, recruiting re-entry women for traditionally "male" academic or vocational programs, and special populations and recruitment. Suggestions concerning admissions include the following areas: criteria, other ways of assessing ability, forms and admissions packets, fees and the prohibitive costs of applying, other problems in admissions policies, and deterrents in the admissions office. Legal considerations include Title IX, the Public Health Service Act, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. A selected list of resources is included. (SW)

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Recruitment and Admissions: Opening the Door For Re-entry Women*

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WANTED: Your Opinion

As part of its WEEA grant on the educational needs of re-entry women and other nontraditional postsecondary students, the Project on the Status and Education of Women seeks your reactions and comments on each one of the papers developed. Please help us by filling out the brief questionnaire at the back of this paper and return it by September 30, 1980 in the pre-paid envelope we have provided. We look forward to receiving your suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

A critical concern of educators throughout the country has been the gloomy forecast of declining numbers of 18-22 year olds during the coming decades. The most recent projections range from a 25 percent drop in high school graduates by 1992 (National Center for Educational Statistics) to a dismal 33 percent potential decline in overall college enrollment by the year 2000.[1] Unless institutions develop new programs to attract and retain a new student population, they may find themselves losers in the struggle for survival during the next twenty years.

Women returning to school are potentially the largest group of new students who will fill the gap created by the declining number of 18-22 year olds. The Census Bureau reports that between 1975 and 1978 the numbers of women between the ages of 24 and 34, returning to school, rose 187 percent. This figure is almost four times higher than the number of men who returned to school during that same time period. Projections by the Carnegie Council suggest that, by the year 2000, 52 percent of all undergraduate students will be women and 50 percent of all undergraduates will be over the age of 22. The Council further predicts that the returning women will help offset a 23 percent decline in enrollment of the traditional 18-22 year old students.[2]

Thus, many schools have actively recruited, developed and expanded services for returning women—maintaining and often even increasing enrollments. For many women, such programmatic innovations have smoothed the transition back into the academic world.

Equally important is the fact that programs and services at the college level have traditionally been geared to younger (18-22 year old) students. Until recently, both recruitment programs and admissions policies discriminated against women, and against older women in particular. In the last decade however, much has changed, and many schools have made a clear commitment to offering equal access and educational opportunity to their re-entry population through the development of outreach efforts and institutional services and programs which reflect both an understanding of, and support for, this new student body.

* This paper was written by Loribeth Weinstein. Staff from the Women's Re-entry Project and the Project on the Status and Education of Women also contributed to the research and development of this paper.

FIELD EVALUATION DRAFT: This paper was developed under Grant #G0079-01070 from the Women's Educational Equity Act Program of the Department of Education. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the Department of Education, or the Association of American Colleges, and no official endorsement should be inferred. For further information, contact the Women's Re-entry Project, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202) 387-1300.

Yet many more women might apply for admission if they knew about the programs and policies which would make their going back to school possible, such as special re-entry programs and the availability of financial aid. They may not know that schools have changed, and that other women are returning in large numbers to start or complete their education.

Furthermore, many of the usual ways of recruiting students are aimed at high school seniors, and are not appropriate for older students. Similarly, admissions policies developed to evaluate high school students are often not well suited for returning women.

This paper will identify problems in the recruitment and admission of re-entry women. Additionally, ways in which institutions can be more responsive to these students are suggested. Whether or not a particular suggestion is appropriate for a particular institution will depend upon the characteristics of that institution and those of its re-entry students. A wide range of possible actions is included so that institutions can pursue those more appropriate to their individual circumstances.

Because many of the barriers which limit the access of women also limit the access of other nontraditional students, institutions are likely to find many of the recommendations in this paper helpful in increasing educational opportunities and participation for other nontraditional students as well. Institutions may also find this paper helpful as the basis for a self-evaluation of recruiting and admissions policies and programs.

Obstacles to Re-entry

The number of women returning to school has increased signicantly during the past ten years, and undoubtedly will continue to be an important pool from which institutions can attract new students. Thus, institutions will need to make special efforts to reach out to these wcmen.

In order to recruit these women, institutions need to be aware of how women, contemplating re-entry, may have to deal with any one of a series of difficulties, such as:

- policies or procedures which inadvertently discourage older women, e.g., restrictions on part-time study or financial aid
- unfamiliarity about special institutional programs and services or with procedures with respect to enrollment, admissions, transfer of credit, and major and graduation requirements
- lack of child care or after school supervision for children
- financial aid concerns
- transportation needs
- scheduling problems
- general lack of confidence with respect to skills and abilities
- academic insecurity
- unsupportive family or spouse
- guilt feelings about returning to school, etc.[3]

These barriers and others may be powerful deterrents to returning to school. Through the provision of information as well as programs targeted directly at the re-entry population, institutions can provide a substantial impetus to returning to school.

RECRUITMENT

Recruiting and the Re-entry Woman: First Steps

Re-entry women, like all other students, vary considerably as a group. Furthermore, re-entry populations may differ significantly from campus to campus, depending on the kinds of programs offered, and the location of the institution. For example, institutions whose student body is drawn primarily from an urban population will develop somewhat different recruitment strategies from an institution attracting rural or suburban women.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Examine available institutional data about re-entry students and applicants.** Collect data where necessary.
- **Establish a task force composed of administrators, faculty, staff, and re-entry women to examine current recruiting practices in relation to older women.**
- **Assess how current recruiting policies reach different kinds of re-entry women,** such as:
  - women with school age or grown children
  - women with pre-school age children
  - single parents
  - displaced homemakers
  - middle class women
  - working class women
  - minority women
  - women without any college experience
  - women who want to complete previously started undergraduate degrees
  - women who want to begin or continue graduate school

- **Determine whether special recruiting strategies should be aimed at particular groups.** (Alverno College (WI) developed a poster with a picture of a young woman and a baby, asking "Ready to go back to school?")
- **Determine whether special services are needed to retain these women as students.**
- **Develop a specific plan to recruit re-entry women.**
- **Lend full institutional support to both strategies and programs aimed at recruiting re-entry women.**
- **Inform recruiters about policies and programs for re-entry women.**
- **Include re-entry women among recruiters.**

Getting The Word Out
What Do Women Need To Know?

The information that returning women students find helpful falls into three categories:

- information about the institution's educational programs;
- information about how to get in—enrollment, transfer of credit, course requirements, etc;
- information about services and special programs, such as financial aid and re-entry programs.

Although this information is similar to that in catalogs and brochures used to attract younger students, special efforts and materials targeted at the re-entry population can be particularly effective in recruiting adult women.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Determine what information needs to be given** to potential re-entry students in each of the three areas listed above.
- **Check with current re-entry women students to find out what kinds of information they found helpful.**
- **Make sure that whatever information is provided to prospective re-entry women has been thoroughly assimilated by all institutional administrators, faculty and staff.**

Developing Specific Materials

In some instances, separate materials and activities will be needed; in others, existing recruiting strategies or materials can easily be expanded to incorporate information appropriate to re-entry women.

Many schools find that materials aimed directly at potential re-entry students not only attract these students, but can also help ease the re-entry process. The existence of such materials often gives a woman an initial indication that she is both welcome and wanted by the institution.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Examine existing materials to determine which information used to attract re-entry women should be incorporated into current outreach materials and/or developed separately.**
- **Develop general brochures about women returning to school.**
- **Develop materials about specific programs for re-entry women.**
  California State University, Fresno, offers a slide presentation designed to familiarize prospective students with the school (as well as providing them with an opportunity to talk with other women who have re-entered the university).
- **Provide booklets or manuals for returning women.**
  The Universities of California at Santa Barbara, Davis, and Berkeley are among a growing number of schools which have published handbooks specifically written for re-entering women. These booklets explain programs and policies as well as list services and resources which are of particular interest to re-entry women.
- **Develop posters aimed specifically at older women.**
- **Develop a local or statewide directory of re-entry programs.**
  The Maryland Commission on Women has published and distributed a booklet entitled *Continuing Education for Women in Maryland* which provides comprehensive summaries of adult educational opportunities at every level in Maryland.

Outreach Strategies: What the Institution Can Do

- **Disseminate materials throughout the community such as:**
  - libraries
  - community centers and agencies
  - churches and synogogues
  - supermarkets
  - shopping centers
  - welfare or unemployment centers
  - nursery schools and day care centers
  - elementary and secondary schools
  - educational brokers
  - government offices

- health centers
- banks
- women's organizations
- minority organizations
- neighborhood associations
- local Chambers of Commerce
- local industry and businesses
- PTA groups
- grange and county extension offices
- jury rooms

In addition to distributing materials at various places in the community, San Jose City College (CA) prints leaflets describing educational opportunities and financial aid programs for economically disadvantaged women and then has them inserted into welfare check envelopes.

- **Develop rip-off-mail-back postcards for bulletin boards in public places.**
- **Incorporate information about re-entry women in existing recruiting strategies,** e.g., include pictures of re-entry women in the college catalog and other recruiting materials.
- **Make a special effort to include articles about re-entry women in publicity about the institution.**
- **Organize an information fair on campus for potential returning women students,** with posters, displays, and materials to provide basic information. Have staff and/or re-entry students available for questions. Conduct workshops at the fair. Provide short counseling sessions (15 minutes or so) on re-entry for those who are interested. Hold similar fairs out in the community such as in a church, library, shopping center, or local YWCA.
- **Conduct an open house on campus** as a way to introduce prospective students to the institution. As well as having displays, posters, and other materials available, conduct workshops. Have personnel including re-entry students available to answer questions.
- **Have a wine and cheese party, or a brown bag lunch, or pot-luck supper for prospective students.**
- **Offer a day, evening or weekend of "sample classes" available for a small fee.** Provide counselors to advise and inform prospective students.
- **Develop newspaper courses with on-campus forums.** Some re-entry women will test their ability and interest in re-entry with these courses.
- **Hold a career or career-changers' fair.**
- **Start a re-entry women's speakers bureau.** Send administrators, faculty, and/or re-entry women to discuss the institution's programs. Notify local groups such as women's organizations and PTAs about the service.
- **Conduct periodic meetings, seminars, or workshops in the community** at schools, libraries, churches, community centers, etc. to provide information for prospective students on institutional programs for re-entry women. **Schedule meetings at different times (day, night, and weekends) to accommodate women with different schedules.**
- **Cosponsor meetings and workshops with women's organizations and other community groups.**
- **Develop permanent or traveling displays for key community locations** such as banks, shopping centers, libraries, and community centers.
- **Use re-entry women students or alumni in addition to faculty, administrators, and staff in community outreach programs aimed at re-entry women.**
- **Use newspaper ads and articles** to convey information about re-entering school.
- **Include information about re-entry women's programs in televised or radio courses.** These courses may serve as a recruiting device because some women may use them as a way to test out their ability and interest in returning to school.
- **Use radio advertising, public service announcements, talk shows, and other programs** to provide information about re-entry women.
- **Mail out flyers, newsletters, or brochures to potential students as well as to community resources.**
- **Include information about re-entry women and programs in alumni magazines.**
- **Offer counseling about returning to school.** Douglas College (NJ) offers educational counseling for women on the New Brunswick campus and also has a college outreach at a local church which offers free educational and career counseling.
- **Conduct workshops for women on how additional schooling can augment future career or vocational planning.**
- **Have a "hot line" prospective re-entry students can call.** Provide evening and weekend service, or alternatively, a recorded message containing information about the program.
- **Develop materials to be included with local utility bills.**

- **Have a one-step center providing information** on admissions, financial aid, counseling, testing, etc. with evening and/or weekend hours.

Re-entry Workshops, Courses, and Programs

For many women, the idea of returning to school as an adult learner or re-entry woman can be somewhat overwhelming; this feeling may be especially acute the longer that they have been out of school. Often they will need more than simple brochures which list curricula and services. They will also need support, and a way to test out whether or not they can, and want to, attend school.

Workshops and courses can provide information about institutional services and programs and also help prospective students overcome any sense of isolation by meeting other students also returning to school.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Provide a series of workshops and/or credit or non-credit courses on subjects such as:**
  - **returning to school**
  - **refreshing skills/basic skills help**
  - **academic and career exploration**

The University of Michigan conducts a series of "Information Clinics" for prospective students during the year. The clinics offer information and advice on application procedures, admissions policies, financial aid, etc.

The University of Massachusetts offers "Back-to-College Seminars," designed to help people past traditional college age plan a college career "with a minimum of inconvenience, expense, and anxiety." These seminars are offered weekly at the Boston campus and at a variety of locations in the greater Boston area. They are well advertised in a variety of city and suburban newspapers.

The University of California at Santa Barbara holds a workshop for women considering re-entry to UCSB, to address questions about admissions requirements, majors, financial aid, and juggling multiple responsibilities. Among the places where the workshop is advertised is the Women's Center newsletter, which has a regular column devoted to the women's re-entry program. (In addition, the re-entry program offers pre-admission counseling on a one-to-one basis.) "You Too Can Return to College" is the title of a six-week course which offers special counseling and orientation services to women who are thinking of returning to school at the University of California, Davis.

Direct Institutional Services: A Major Recruitment Strategy

Although an institution may develop an extensive strategy for recruiting re-entry women, it may well fail if it does not also provide basic institutional services to support re-entry women as students. Indeed, supportive services may be used as part of the recruiting strategy itself.

The services, policies, and programs[4] most critical to the success of both the recruiting and retention of re-entry women include:

- financial aid
- counseling services
- child care provisions
- career development programs
- academic counseling
- flexible scheduling of courses
- ease of transfer of credit
- availability of experiential credit and nonstandard credit programs
- flexible scheduling of institutional services
- flexible applications/admissions policies
- skill refresher courses and remedial programs
- housing provisions
- adequate parking and/or transportation

What the Institution Can Do

In addition to examining these policies, services, and programs, institutions might do the following:

- **Provide brochures or pamphlets about the areas listed above,** and tailor the information to re-entry women.
- **Highlight these policies, services, and programs in materials aimed at re-entry women in general publicity about the institution.**
- **Include information about these items in the college catalog and in other recruiting materials.**

Recruiting Re-entry Women for Traditionally "Male" Academic or Vocational Programs[5]

Recruitment has an important role to play in extending the opportunity to all women to participate in fields which have traditionally been all male. Community colleges have been particularly active in recruiting older women into specific vocational training programs. Many other colleges and universities are also making a concerted effort to recruit women in gen-

eral into non-traditional occupational fields such as engineering and the sciences.

An additional concern has been the lack of refresher or retraining courses for women with previously obtained degrees who are seeking to return to work. The Scientific Manpower Commission reports approximately 900,000 women were awarded baccalaureate degrees in the physical, life, mathematical, and social science fields from 1960-61 through 1975-76.[6] Of that figure it is estimated that 315,000 women currently *not* employed are eligible for career training or re-training projects[7]—yet very few programs exist to augment their re-entry into the labor force.

What the Institution Can Do

Although the recruitment strategies mentioned throughout this paper are generally applicable for traditional and nontraditional fields, institutions might want to develop additional strategies for nontraditional fields, including:

- **Examine current enrollment figures with respect to the numbers of older women enrolled in nontraditional occupational/vocational fields.** Low numbers may reflect a need to re-evaluate recruitment and admissions strategies.
- **Examine general recruiting materials for nontraditional programs and include materials about returning women.**
- **Evaluate specific recruiting strategies, if any, for getting women into traditionally "male" programs, and incorporate into these strategies materials and activities aimed at returning women.**
- **Conduct career awareness workshops specifically directed toward encouraging women to enter nontraditional academic or vocational fields.** Workshops might include an exploration of values, interests, goals, and future plans, as well as information about specific fields and academic preparation.
- **Offer free or low-cost vocational and aptitude testing to interested women considering academic re-entry.**
- **Hold nontraditional career fairs for prospective re-entry students** either on campus or in the community with representatives from the institution and local industry or business.
- **Conduct tours of local industries, hospitals, and businesses for prospective or enrolled re-entry women, in order to provide them with information about possible employment and/or training.**
- **Provide local industries with information about training programs or courses which may be useful to their employees.**
- **Develop information (booklets, posters, brochures, etc.) about the possibilities of re-entry women entering (or re-entering) specific traditionally male fields.**
- **Disseminate information on vocational and technical training programs to AFDC case workers, CETA offices, welfare departments, etc.**
- **Publicize a list of possible funding sources which are available to older women seeking to enter nontraditional academic/vocational training programs.**
- **Encourage re-entry women to explore internship possibilities in nontraditional fields.**
- **Offer refresher or "brush-up" courses for women with previously earned degrees in the sciences** to facilitate re-entry into the labor force or school. If possible, offer "brush-up" programs during summer sessions as well as during the normal academic year.

Special Populations and Recruitment[8]

The need to actively recruit among special populations of re-entry women, including minority women, the elderly, and the handicapped, is critical in order to provide equal access to education. These women who have often been denied full educational participation will not suddenly appear at the doorstep of an institution, despite a commitment and willingness to encourage access. If these women are to enroll, the institution must reach out through specific program development and aggressive recruitment.

What the Institution Can Do

Many of the strategies for recruiting re-entry women in general which are listed throughout this paper can be easily adapted for women of special population groups. Institutions can also do the following:

- **Establish one or more task forces to examine recruiting procedures and how they affect re-entry women who are minority group members, handicapped, or elderly.** Include members of these groups on the task force.
- **Find out which special populations are among the institution's re-entry women, and which groups are not represented.**
- **Develop a specific plan to actively recruit re-entry women among these groups.**
- **Examine existing institutional data about re-entry women in these groups and establish procedures for collecting additional data about such applicants and students.**

- **Evaluate all general recruiting materials for inclusion of information about re-entry women from these groups.**
- **Develop special materials aimed specifically at potential re-entry women in these groups.**
- **Examine current programs for recruiting minorities** to insure that they are also reaching potential minority re-entry women.
- **Provide materials in other languages,** e.g. Spanish and/or Vietnamese, to potential re-entry students for whom English may be a second language.
- **Develop training for staff (admissions, financial aid, minority and handicapped offices, rehabilitation counselors, etc.) who are likely to deal with re-entry women in these groups,** so that staff are sensitive to their concerns and can provide more effective service.
- **Distribute re-entry materials to minority offices and centers on campus as well as to minority organizations, community centers, and churches.**
- **Distribute re-entry materials to hospitals, agencies, and rehabilitation counselors both on and off campus who are likely to deal with handicapped women who are potential re-entry students.**
- **Publish and distribute a list of available funding sources and specific programs funded for minority, handicapped, or elderly women.**
- **Urge local employers, unions, and professional groups to provide opportunities for their minority, handicapped, or elderly employees to return to school.**
- **Develop specific programs or workshops about minority women and open them to the community.** The University of Michigan Center for Continuing Education of Women has done this.
- **Cosponsor meetings, workshops and fairs with minority organizations, handicapped, and senior citizen groups.**

ADMISSIONS

Introduction

"Recently I had a thirty-five year old woman tell me that the faculty in her department initially did not want her admitted to the program, frankly because at her age they felt she was too old to be able to learn."

—Administrator, women's re-entry program
urban college, 1980

Until the passage of legislation prohibiting discrimination, women were often denied equal access to undergraduate and graduate education. (Legal prohibitions against discrimination in admissions based on age and sex are discussed later in this paper on page 10.)

Nevertheless, for older women, the admission barriers to full educational access may still be formidable: indirect discrimination based upon sex may be coupled with direct discrimination based upon age. Biased criteria for admissions and/or hostile or indifferent attitudes of admissions staff or other personnel may either, by implication or intent, substantially discourage or actually discriminate against returning women in the application/admissions process.

Criteria

Most institutions believe they have sex-blind or sex-neutral admissions procedures and criteria. Unfortunately, having a policy prohibiting sex and age discrimination does not by itself insure that discrimination will not occur, especially against returning women students.

Among the overtly discriminatory admissions policies and practices which may affect re-entry women are the following:

- **evaluating marital and/or parental status differently for male and female students**
- **lack of, or less, financial aid for married women students than for married men or other students in general**
- **preference for men who have been out of school (in military service, for example) over women who have been out of school** (e.g., for childbirth or childrearing) and who are viewed as less desirable students
- **using different standards for admitting men and women because of assumptions about what are suitable fields for women** (e.g., home economics and nursing) and men (e.g., science and architecture)
- **not admitting older students, or admitting older men but not older women.** For example, giving preference to a retired military officer over a woman who has spent much of her adult life in the home, raising children

Additionally, some criteria which are ostensibly fair may, in effect, have a discriminatory or disproportionate effect on re-entry women especially at the graduate school level. Examples of these include:

- **requiring recommendations from previous professors or teachers.**
  This may be difficult or impossible for women who have been out of school for a long period, and therefore is a major obstacle to returning to school;

- **evaluating past achievements such as awards and scholarships, membership in honorary societies, and athletic participation.**
  Until Title IX was enacted, discrimination limited the opportunities of women to obtain awards and scholarships—many were restricted to men formally or informally. Some honorary societies for women admitted smaller numbers and required higher grades than the men's honorary societies. Additionally, women had few or no opportunities for athletic participation and some other extracurricular activities;

- **lack of membership in professional honorary societies which allow student membership as an indication of lack of ability or interest.**
  In the past, women were not allowed to join many of these. (For example, Phi Delta Kappa, the honorary educational society, did not allow women to join prior to 1974);

- **evaluation of past employment and salary as a measure of ability or commitment.**
  Because of the general patterns of past and current discrimination, as well as occupational segregation, women are likely to have held clerical and other so-called "feminine" jobs rather than jobs which would be more indicative of their interests or potential;

- **downgrading of volunteer experience because it is not paid work.**
  In contrast, community service by men may be viewed as evidence of additional skills and interests;

- **inability to attend school full-time in the past or present as a measure of commitment or interest.**
  Many women attend part-time because of child-rearing responsibilities;

- **viewing interruption of schooling, particularly at the graduate level, as a lack of academic interest.**
  Because many women take time out for child-rearing, interruptions in schooling are not necessarily indicative of a lack of commitment or interest;

- **regarding a late start in a profession or vocation as evidence of a lack of commitment.**
  Many women resume schooling or make a new commitment at an older age than their male counterparts;

- **using the lack of graduate assistantships as a sign of lack of interest or accomplishment.**
  In the past, some departments would not give them to women, particularly if they were married;

- **using military service as a measure of broad background, or giving additional preference to veterans when a male and female are otherwise equally qualified.**
  Women have been exempt from the draft, and all of the services have always had quotas for women.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Develop a formal policy prohibiting sex and age discrimination in admissions.**

- **Develop a specific policy acknowledging the institution's commitment to re-entry women.**

- **Communicate the policies to all personnel responsible for decisions, as well as to those who may have contact with prospective students, such as faculty and alumni. Graduate department heads and relevant department committees should also be included when they are responsible for recruiting and/or admissions decisions.**

- **Inform and train personnel about specific discriminatory admissions practices,** such as those listed in this paper, so that they understand which practices are allowable, and which ones violate institutional policy and federal statutes.

- **Monitor the admission process.** Data on the number of re-entry women who request information, who apply, and who are admitted need to be collected and evaluated periodically. The data should be broken down for each administrative unit which has responsibility for recruiting and selection. (For example, at the graduate level, the figures should be available for each department as well as for the school as a whole.)

- **Ask returning women students and applicants for their evaluations of the admissions process.** Did they encounter any bias? Did faculty or other personnel attempt to discourage them?

- **Hire or assign specific personnel with special responsibility for re-entry women.**

Other Ways of Assessing Ability

The traditional ways of assessing the ability of potential students, such as tests and grade point average, are often applicable to a large number of re-entry women. But for some women, these methods may be inappropriate, especially when the prospective student has never attended college, had poor grades in the past, has not attended school for a lengthy period of time, and/or comes from a disadvantaged background. Many institutions have attempted to develop other ways to evaluate the ability of a prospective student to do college work. Many use a combination of factors to determine eligibility.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Change requirements for admissions.** Many institutions have eliminated standardized tests as a requirement for admission for older students. Others use past learning experience to evaluate potential students. The University of Michigan no longer requires SAT scores as a condition for acceptance.
- **Admit students on a provisional basis or as "special students" if earlier grades are not up to regular admissions standards.** Students who have interrupted their education often do better the second time around. Under the "exceptions rule" at the California State University, Fresno, some older women students who do not qualify for entrance under ordinary circumstances are permitted to enter if their background in other ways indicates that they are capable of doing university work. The University of Wisconsin at Madison allows the option to use first semester grades in lieu of standardized tests or previously earned grades for many students.
- **Keep in mind that grades have become inflated over the past decade; students generally received lower grades in the past than they do now.**
- **Use staff who deal with adult students to interview applicants.**
- **Allow students to submit an autobiographical statement or portfolio of past learning experience.** Johnston College (CA) and LaVerne University (CA) use these methods respectively. Many re-entry women have acquired knowledge through work, community, and volunteer experience that is equivalent to academic work.
- **Allow students to submit a proposal for a learning project.** This is done at the University of Minnesota's University Without Walls.
- **Allow students to complete a program planning course** (such as that used at Moorhead State University, NM, and Minnesota Metropolitan State University).
- **Use "open admissions" or special criteria for disadvantaged students, and insure that disadvantaged re-entry women are included in these programs.**

Forms and Admissions Packets

Many application forms and materials are specifically written for younger students. Some may still require "parental consent." Others which leave little room to answer such questions as "List previous education" may convey a message of indifference to students who have accumulated a large number of credits and are seeking re-entry.

An additional problem occurs when, along with the application, informational catalogs and brochures are sent to a prospective returning student. Often the material does not include information about services related to re-entry women. Photographs or descriptions of student services may inadvertently imply that most students are 18-22, so that prospective older students may wonder if they will be "out of place."

What the Institution Can Do

- **Evaluate both the content and form of information and questions on application forms to ensure that they do not discourage or discriminate against the older students.**
- **Include materials about re-entry women (or information about how these materials may be obtained) in admissions packets.**

Fees: Prohibitive Costs of Applying[10]

For some women contemplating returning to school, the initial cost of applying may be prohibitive. Schools which charge a large fee for processing an application may discourage some re-entry women from applying.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Waive or reduce fee requirements for application procedures.**
- **Allow re-entry women to matriculate without taking costly standardized tests.**

Other Problems in Admissions Policies

There are a variety of other ways in which institutional policies may have a disproportionate impact on re-entry women in the admissions/enrollment process. (Those listed below are treated in greater detail in other papers of the re-entry women series which contain recommendations for dealing with these specific problems.)

Policies regarding admissions and transfer of credit:[11] Stringent regulations governing transfer of credit may have a negative effect by discouraging older women from applying. Many women have interrupted their schooling for reasons due to marriage, raising children, putting a spouse through school, or moving. Upon applying to another institution they find their admissions status contingent upon the fact that they will have to repeat several or many courses unrecognized by the new institution.

Policies regarding admissions and part-time study:[12] Regulations governing full-time study also have a disproportionate impact upon those women who cannot,

due to family responsibilities, and/or job requirements return to school full-time. Charging higher fees for half- or part-time studies may also discourage re-entry women.

Policies regarding admissions and financial aid:[13] An additional factor which makes it difficult for re-entry women in the initial admissions/enrollment process is the regulations governing eligibility for financial aid. Many institutions have limited or no financial aid available for less than full-time students.

Deterrents in the Admissions Office

For women contemplating returning to school following a prolonged absence from academe, contacting the admissions office can be a potentially painful first step. The admissions office may seem indifferent, removed, and generally unsympathetic to a woman's concerns, or completely unaware of special programs or services for re-entry women. The result is that a woman thinking about returning may simply decide not to—or will seek re-entry at a different institution.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Train admissions personnel. Hold workshops for the entire staff** in order to sensitize them to the particular concerns of nontraditional students. Since much of the initial personal contact between the prospective student and the institution occurs within the admissions office, it is of great importance to have an admissions staff that is both informed and aware of the particular information and services which the institution offers for re-entry women.
- **Designate specific trained admissions staff to work with prospective re-entry women.**
- **Have the admissions office hold group interviews with prospective re-entry women in order to provide them with information on programs as well as providing them guidelines on admissions procedures.**
- **Provide admissions personnel with brochures and materials about programs and services related to re-entry women.**

Additional Recommendations for Easing the Admissions Process for Re-entry Women

Following a self-evaluation of admissions practices and procedures, institutions may wish to initiate changes in their application/admissions policies which can better facilitate academic re-entry for nontraditional students. Listed below are a series of recommendations which may be helpful for admissions personnel in deciding a future course of action:

- **Develop a special application/admissions packet which can be mailed out, upon request for information, to prospective re-entry students.** Include in the packet:
  - college or university catalog/bulletin
  - information on special programs for re-entry women
  - information on special services (e.g., child care programs, transportation, counseling programs) which are available to returning women
  - information on financial aid, including loans, scholarships, and work-study opportunities, available for part-time students
  - a list of all non-credit as well as credit based programs
  - a guide sheet which describes the application-enrollment procedures, and which offers guidelines on filling out an application
  - information on transferring credits and receiving experiential credit
  - information on housing and other resources within the university and neighboring community
- **Offer pre-application/pre-enrollment counseling for prospective re-entry women through the admissions office or continuing education program.**
- **Interview prospective returning students, where possible.** Many schools find it helpful to interview prospective re-entry women as part of the application process. This enables the institution to more fully describe the types of programs available as well as giving them a better evaluation of the prospective student. For a woman thinking about returning to school an interview can be important in simply getting her to the campus, as well as giving her the opportunity to ask questions and obtain information first hand.
- **Hire a former re-entry woman to work on re-entry admissions.** For those institutions which do not have the funding or the population to warrant a full-time position, hire someone part-time.
- **Provide evening hours at least one day a week.** If budget constraints do not allow the extra time, consider opening later one day so that the office can remain open that evening.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Title IX of the Education Amendments[14]

Title IX generally prohibits sex discrimination in all federally assisted education programs. Discrimination

in admissions and recruiting is prohibited in:

- public vocational schools
- public professional schools
- public undergraduate institutions
- all graduate schools

Recruitment and admissions to *private* undergraduate institutions, including admissions to private undergraduate professional or vocational schools are exempt.

Sections 86.21-86.23 of the Title IX regulation detail the recruiting and the admissions provisions of Title IX.[15]

- **The regulation bars quotas** based on the number or proportion of persons of either sex who may be admitted to institutions covered by Title IX.
- **Preference may not be given to one sex[16] nor may applicants be ranked separately by sex.**
- **Institutions may not use tests or other criteria for admission which have a disproportionate adverse effect on members of one sex** unless the test or criteria can be shown to validly predict success in the education program or activity in question, *and* alternative tests or criteria are not available.
- **Asking a student's marital status prior to admission is also forbidden.**
- **Institutions may not have rules or policies concerning parental, family, or marital status of students which make distinctions on the basis of sex, nor may they discriminate because of pregnancy or related conditions.**
- **Institutions must make comparable efforts to recruit members of each sex, except when special efforts to recruit members of one sex are needed to remedy the effects of past discrimination.**[17] Thus, special attempts to recruit re-entry women may be viewed as an attempt to remedy past discrimination. However, services and programs for re-entry women cannot exclude re-entry men. Materials describing these services and programs might read, "This program was designed for women who have been out of the work force and out of school for a period of years. Men who believe they would benefit from this program and would like to participate may do so."

The Public Health Service Act[18]

Titles VII and VIII of this Act were amended in 1971 to prohibit sex discrimination in admissions to federally funded programs for training health professionals such as doctors, nurses, and X-ray technicians. There are no exemptions from coverage. (Admission to federally funded health training programs at private institutions is covered by this Act, even though admission to these institutions is exempted under Title IX. The provisions of this Act are otherwise consistent with those of Title IX.)

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975[19]

This Act, effective January 1, 1979, prohibits *unreasonable* discrimination on the basis of age in federally assisted programs and activities. Age is not defined; the Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of age *at any age*. Although there are some exemptions, most age discrimination in higher education is prohibited. Thus, policies and practices which restrict admissions on the basis of age are illegal. Additionally, policies which seem "reasonable" for students aged 18-22 may deliberately or inadvertently discriminate against older women (and men), and thereby violate the Act.

Women, even as young as 25 or 30, are sometimes considered "too old" to enroll in certain postsecondary programs, particularly at the graduate level. While this attitude is changing, women who are older than traditional students are still sometimes seen as "deviants." At the undergraduate level, the shortage of 18-22 year olds has, however, created a "buyers market" and it has become increasingly easier for "older" women to enter undergraduate programs in many, but not all, institutions.

In contrast, because of their highly competitive nature, some graduate and professional schools have not experienced a shortage of students and discrimination on the basis of age is likely to be more pronounced in these schools.

There seems to be no consistent rationale in the way different institutions (or different departments within the same institution) determine which age is "too old" for admittance. In one school it may be 30, in another 40, in another 45. Others have no set age cut-off but take age into account, nevertheless. Women who have delayed or interrupted their graduate education in order to build their family sometimes find it difficult to gain admittance to such programs.[20] This is also an area in which sex discrimination is often compounded by age discrimination.

In many graduate programs, course work done five or ten years earlier is considered invalid. In some disciplines—law and medicine, for example—the time frames are even shorter so that two to three year old credits may have "expired."

Many attitudinal factors also work against admission of older women to education programs at all levels. Some faculty may feel uncomfortable relating to students their own age or older. Often, older women are viewed as lacking potential or as having no relevant

experience, especially if they have been away from school to raise children. At one institution a few years ago a special program for attracting retired military personnel was initiated at a time when women in the same age bracket were told they were "too old" to return to school. Additionally, an irregular work and/or school history of women with childbearing and family responsibilities is often viewed negatively, as though it had the same connotation of instability which a similar history might imply for a male or someone without the demands of homemaking and family.

What the Institution Can Do

- **Inform all personnel handling recruiting and admissions about the requirements of federal laws.** Conduct workshops and/or disseminate materials explaining the implications of these laws for their offices or departments.
- **Develop a procedure to inform *new* staff of the legal requirements and prohibitions.**
- **Include a nondiscrimination clause concerning sex and age on admissions and recruiting materials.**
- **Inform prospective re-entry women about grievance procedures** (required under Title IX) for sex discrimination complaints.
- **Expand grievance procedures to cover age as well as sex discrimination.**

CONCLUSION

For those women who have been out of school for a considerable length of time, or who are simply unfamiliar with academic policies and procedures, the barriers to returning to school can appear formidable. And yet, perhaps what is most difficult initially, is simply *deciding* to return. Recruitment programs aimed at the re-entry population can often act as an important and supportive impetus for returning to school. Admissions policies which reflect understanding, concern, and a desire to extend educational opportunity to these women, will go far in opening the doors of equal access in education for the re-entry population.

NOTES

[1] These statistics were compiled and presented by Maureen Mackey in her article, "The Selling of Sheepskin," *Change* Magazine, April, 1980, p. 28-33.

[2] Carnegie Council on Policy Studies on Higher Education, *Three Thousand Futures: The Next 20 Years In Higher Education*, Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1980.

[3] For further information on these issues, refer to the various papers on re-entry women to be published by the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1980.

[4] These services, policies, and programs which present major barriers for re-entry women, are discussed at length in the full series of re-entry papers published by the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1980. For further information, refer to the appropriate topic.

[5] This paper serves only as a brief introduction to the subject of recruitment into nontraditional academic or vocational programs. For more information see *Recruiting Women for Traditionally "Male" Careers: Programs and Resources for Getting Women into the Men's World*, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1977, and the "Selected List of Resources" at the conclusion of this paper.

[6] Sources: Scientific Manpower Commission, *Professional Women and Minorities, A Manpower Data Resource Service*. 2d. ed. Washington, DC, November, 1978; *Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*. Washington, DC: National Science Foundation, NSF 77-304, 1977; and National Center for Educational Statistics, "Earned Degrees Conferred Series," Washington, DC.

[7] Lantz, Alma E. with Marna C. Wittington, M. Louise Fox, Linda Elliott, and Karen Sacket, *Re-entry Programs for Female Scientists*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980, p. 20.

[8] For more information on this subject, see paper on special populations of re-entry women, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, in press.

[9] The difficulties for older women getting admitted to graduate school programs are of great importance. This paper deals primarily with re-entry in admissions at the undergraduate level. Graduate school entry is covered in a separate paper, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, in press.

[10] See "Financial Aid: Helping Re-entry Women Pay College Costs," Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1980.

[11] For more information on this subject, see "Barriers to Re-entry Women: College Transfer Policies, Residency and Graduation Requirements," Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1980.

[12] For more information on this subject, see the paper on part-time study and re-entry women, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, in press.

[13] For more information on this subject, see "Financial Aid: Helping Re-entry Women Pay College Costs," Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1980.

[14] Education Amendments of 1972 (Sections 901-907), 20 U.S.C. Sections 1681-86 (1972). The Title IX regulation can be found at 34 C.F.R. Part 106 and at 40 *Fed. Reg.* 21428-46 (June 4, 1975). For additional information, see "Federal Laws Concerning Sex Discrimination in Educational Institutions," and other Title IX materials published by the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges.

[15] Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 permits special recruiting programs. Section 86.23(a) of the regulation implementing the statute states that ". . . a recipient may be required to undertake additional recruitment efforts for one sex as a remedial action." An institution attempting to overcome the effects of past discriminatory practices may

engage in activities designed to interest women students in fields where they are under-represented.

[16] The Supreme Court decision in *Regents of the University of California* vs. *Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978) allows race to be taken into account in admissions decisions in some instances. However, it is not clear if the same reasoning applies to sex.

[17] See footnote 15.

[18] Title VII (Section 799A) and Title VII (Section 845) were amended by the Comprehensive Manpower Act and the Nurse Training Amendments Act of 1971.

[19] Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. Sections 6101-6107 (1975). The final government-wide regulation for the Age Discrimination Act can be found at 45 C.F.R. Part 90 and at 44 *Fed. Reg.* 33768-88 (June 12, 1979). The Act also requires each federal agency to issue agency-specific regulations. At the time of this writing (Summer 1980) agencies were in the process of issuing those regulations. For additional information, see "The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Women on Campus," Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges 1978.

[20] At 28 or older, a 1976 applicant had a 1:4.5 chance of acceptance at medical school—at 27 or younger, the ratio was 1:2.5. In a 1971-72 survey, 22% of applicants aged 28-37 were accepted to medical school, but less than 12% of those 38 and over were accepted. In a 1977 study done by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, of 114 medical schools surveyed, 28 used age as an explicit entrance criterion. One school stated flatly that no applicants over 35 would be considered for admission. These figures apparently reflect the belief that graduate education is an "investment" which yields fewer returns to the discipline and society as the student grows older. However, the longer life span of women in general, as well as individual differences in life span and in career perseverance, may affect the number of years a person devotes to her or his profession as much as their age at the time of admission. For example, older women are less likely to change careers begun later in life; it is quite possible that the "second career" phenomenon is more likely to occur in males who made very early career choices.

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August 1980

Recruitment and Admissions: Opening the Door for Re-entry Women

FIELD TEST

You can assist us in evaluating this paper by completing the following short questionnaire. If you have additional comments, please use the back of this page or add another sheet. It will help us if you return this questionnaire in the enclosed pre-paid envelope by September 30, 1980 to:

Women's Re-entry Project
Project on the Status and Education of Women
Association of American Colleges
1818 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

6

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

1. What is your primary identification? (Check One)

a. ☐ College president or other administrator. Specify title .....
b. ☐ College faculty member, lecturer, professor
c. ☐ College student
d. ☐ Elementary or secondary school teacher or administrator
e. ☐ State or local education agency employee
f. ☐ Federal employee
g. ☐ Other. Please specify .....
.....

2. In addition, are you: (Check All That Apply)

a. ☐ An affirmative action officer or Title IX coordinator?
b. ☐ Directly involved in programs affecting re-entry women?
c. ☐ At a women's college?
d. ☐ A member of a *campus* committee on women, women's center or women's group?
e. ☐ A member of a *noncampus* women's group, women's center, or advocacy group (WEAL, NOW, National Women's Political Caucus, etc.)?
f. ☐ A member of a women's professional society or women's caucus or committee of an academic discipline?

3. If you are currently at a *postsecondary* institution:

a. Is it: ☐ public or ☐ private?
b. Is it a: ☐ university ☐ other 4-year college ☐ 2-year college or ☐ proprietary school?
c. Is the total enrollment: ☐ under 1,000 ☐ 1,000 to 5,000 ☐ 5,001 to 10,000 ☐ over 10,000?
d. In what state is your institution? .....

4. Do you think this is a useful paper?

a. YES (Respond to **ALL** reasons that apply)
1. ☐ to EVALUATE OR CHANGE POLICIES, such as .....
.....
2. ☐ to START NEW PROGRAMS OR EFFORTS to assist re-entry women, such as .....
.....
3. ☐ to REDESIGN OR IMPROVE EXISTING PROGRAMS OR SERVICES, such as .....
.....
4. ☐ to IDENTIFY NEW RESOURCES
5. ☐ to IMPROVE RECRUITMENT of re-entry women to campus by .....
.....
6. ☐ to TRAIN STAFF to work more effectively with issues regarding re-entry women
7. ☐ to EDUCATE OR INFORM OTHERS about the issues. Specify whom .....
.....
8. ☐ to EDUCATE MYSELF ABOUT THE ISSUES
9. ☐ OTHER. Please specify .....
.....

b. ☐ NO, this paper is not useful because .....
.....

5. What, if any, *important* omissions were there from the paper? (Respond to *ALL* that apply)

a. ☐ NONE, it covered all aspects of the topic well.
b. ☐ ISSUES should be described more fully. Please indicate how .....
.....
c. ☐ APPROACHES OR ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES were omitted. Please identify .....
.....
d. ☐ IMPORTANT MODELS OR INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS were not mentioned. Please identify .....
e. ☐ KEY RESOURCES were not mentioned. Please identify .....
.....
f. ☐ OTHER. Please describe any other omissions or suggested additions .....
.....

6. Did you find the paper to be clear, well organized and easy to understand?

a. ☐ Yes
b. ☐ It could be improved by .....
.....

7. If you found any factual errors or misleading statements in the paper, please identify them (indicating the page number, error or statement and include the correct information if possible). Use the other side of this page.

8. Please provide any additional comments or criticisms. Enclose other descriptive material, if desired, and use another sheet of paper if needed.